



Maj Gen Earnest O. Robbins II

Photo by Keith Fried



## Training Like We Fight

One year after the Sept. 11 attacks on America, the war on terrorism and our homeland defense operations remain in full swing. We're taking the fight to the enemy, and the need for effectively trained and educated airmen is crucial. For the civil engineer, services and personnel communities, Silver Flag training is absolutely vital to their wartime role.

Our three Silver Flag sites (at Tyndall Air Force Base and Ramstein and Kadena Air Bases) form an essential foundation for those deploying into harm's way. As we bed down people and aircraft in remote, dangerous locations, every airman must know his or her job and leadership must bring it all together. Silver Flag has become the lifeblood of our combat capability, with about 6,000 personnel trained at the Tyndall Silver Flag site alone each year. As Col Tom Ryburn, the former Combined Forces Air Component Command C7, states in his interview in this issue — and as I've seen for myself — this investment in contingency team training has paid off during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM with well-planned, well-executed beddowns in the AOR.

Good training produces ready airmen. Silver Flag's realistic, hands-on training with bare base equipment helps ensure that we are experts at our wartime mission, and it provides an indispensable opportunity to train as we deploy and fight.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, new equipment went straight into boxes and warehouses and waited for war to come. Now, "first articles" go to the Silver Flag sites to be available for training right away. For many of our troops, the only time they have the opportunity to see some of this low-density, high-demand equipment is during a rotation to one of the Silver Flag sites.

Prime BEEF and Prime RIBS teams have benefited from first-class training at Silver Flag for years. Now PERSCO (Personnel Support for Contingency Operations) teams have joined the fold, training at Tyndall since last fall and more recently at Ramstein to improve their combat support capabilities. That is what's invaluable about Silver Flag — airmen with different backgrounds and expertise coming together and doing what's necessary to make a bare base operation successful, which is key to agile combat support.

The future of Silver Flag is bright. We'll soon be including the environmental Air Force specialty (the only CE functional that currently does not participate in Silver Flag team training), as well as full unit type code training. We're working to integrate Manpower and Organization teams at all three sites, and perhaps communications and other functionals.

My hat is off to the exceptional airmen, NCOs and officers who have been training cadre members at our Silver Flag sites for the past 10 years. As a result of their efforts, we've ensured our Air Force remains ready and able to deploy anywhere, anytime. No one comes close.

FROM THE TOP